IN THE MATTER OF THE)
REVISION TO THE 2007)
CASELOAD ALLOCATION PLAN)
FOR THE LAKE COUNTY)
SUPERIOR AND CIRCUIT COURTS)

DISSENTING WEIGHTED CASELOAD PLAN AS PROPOSED BY THE CRIMINAL DIVISION OF THE LAKE SUPERIOR COURT AS A REVISION TO THE 2007 PLAN

I. Background

While the judges of the Criminal Division of the Lake Superior Court have always believed that the statistics generated by the Weighted Caseload Plan do not accurately reflect the amount of time required to handle the work being undertaken by the different divisions of the Superior Court, the judges have always been and remain committed to working to bring our allocation of resources within the requirements of Administrative Rule 1. To that end, the senior judges of each division of the Superior Court met on several occasions to review our caseloads, and adjust the division of cases so that the utilization variance among the Lake County Courts would not exceed 40 percentage points. The senior judges arrived at a plan that would call for the reallocation of cases, *not judicial officers*, to meet the variance goals.

The matter was set for approval by the entire Superior Court, which was to take place at a judges meeting on May 16, 2008. As this was simply a meeting to ratify the plan of the senior judges, three of the four criminal division judges did not attend the meeting, but gave

proxies to Senior Judge Salvador Vasquez. At that meeting, the county division baldly refused to "give up" any of their cases, and instead of ratifying the senior judges' plan, the court, *en banc*, over the objection of the criminal division, voted to move a magistrate from the criminal division to the county division full-time. The plan as agreed to by the senior judges was to reallocate 45 - 50% of all Class D felonies to the criminal division. The judges of the civil, juvenile and county divisions voted to move a criminal division magistrate with three of the four criminal division judges not in attendance, notwithstanding the agreement of the senior judges, and without any prior notice to the criminal division.

The criminal division judges determined that the only recourse was to submit this dissenting plan, with an explanation as to the benefits of this plan and the shortcomings of the plan proposed by the other divisions of the Superior Court.

II. Determination of the current reporting of judicial resources.

In reviewing the current statistics, the criminal judges became concerned about how the county division judges are counting their judicial personnel. Specifically, County Division I has a judge, a magistrate, and a "law clerk" who purportedly sits on a regular basis as a judge *pro tempore* in that court. The plan reflects 2.0 judicial officers for that court. County Division III has a judge, a magistrate, and a referee/court administrator. The plan reflects 2.2 judicial officers in that courtroom. County Division IV has a judge and a referee/court administrator, but the plan reflects 1.2 judicial officers in that courtroom. Additionally, a bond court is held every Saturday, with a rotation of county court judges and magistrates, and city court judges presiding over cases from the city courts and county divisions. The bulk of the bond court cases are from the county division, and those judicial

officers are not counted at all. Hence, a question arose as to how these judicial officers should be counted.

To answer that question, the criminal division received a copy of a memo prepared by the Office of State Court Administration addressing the counting of judicial officers. The memo was prepared by Kristin Donnelly-Miller and is attached as Exhibit 1.

Regarding magistrates, the memo indicates,

"... the magistrate is reported in days or fractions of days by each court to which he or she reports, regardless of whether the time spent per week is spent in court, ruling on motions out of court, handling court-related business, attending conferences or meetings or taking allocated vacation time. Collectively, if the magistrate is full time, QCSRs from his or her courts would report 5 days of service per week. If the magistrate is part time, the collected QCSRs would report the appropriate number of days the magistrate is expected to work per week.

Commissioners, Referees and Hearing Officers are counted in the same manner as Magistrates. Temporary Judges may be appointed and serve even if the presiding judge is present and presiding in court, but may only be appointed for 60 days. For some reason, temporary judges are not counted at all. Judges *pro tempore* are only to be appointed under four limited situations, and it was not contemplated that they would sit on a regular basis for a regular court call.

Based upon the above definitions and parameters, the criminal judges question whether the current plan or the plan proposed by the civil, county and juvenile divisions accurately accounts for the judicial officers being utilized in each division. It would appear that based upon these definitions, County Division III should be credited with three judicial officers, and County Division IV should be credited with two judicial officers. Furthermore,

there is a gap in the way the officers are counted that is problematic in County Division I.

They have a court employee who sits as a Judge *Pro Tempore* on a regular basis, who is not counted at all.

III. The Senior Judges' Plan

Regardless of the possible inaccuracies in the counting of judicial resources, the plan arrived at by the senior judges called for reassignment of cases, not additional judicial officers, and brought all of the divisions within compliance with Administrative Rule 1. That plan is attached as Exhibit 2.

While the judges of the criminal division are more than happy to accept a substantial increase in the number of Class D filings, the removal of a magistrate from this division is simply not a viable option. The fact of the matter is that this division cannot effectively and efficiently operate with the removal of a judicial officer. Certainly, all of the divisions of the Superior Court play a critical role in administration of justice in Lake County, but the litigants in the criminal division have their liberty interests at stake, as opposed to those litigants with financial interests or interests in a forum of convenience implicated. If cases are not handled in an expeditious manner in the criminal division, defendants' fundamental constitutional rights and the safety of our communities are compromised. Furthermore, the criminal division is actively investigating the possibility of beginning a drug court in light of the fact that the there is no "Drug Court" in the Superior Courts of Lake County. There is a local not-for-profit agency that is ready, willing, and able to write and administer a grant for that purpose. The removal of a judicial officer from this division would eliminate the possibility of a drug court.

The filing of Class D felonies is one of the main problems in the allocation of resources between the criminal and county court divisions. In past years, it was always understood that the Class D felony filings should be split between the criminal division and the county courts on a 50/50 basis. In reality, that has not occurred. In this past year, the county courts received about 78% of those filings. The reason for this is that there has been no guidance from the courts to the prosecutor's offices about which types of D felonies should be filed in which courts. As evident in Exhibit 2, the reallocation of the filings of Class D felonies, greatly reduces the under-utilization suggested by the current computations.

In addition to the strain placed on the criminal division by the removal of a judicial officer, the plan proposed by the civil, county and juvenile divisions would also have negative fiscal implications for the taxpayers of Lake County. The addition of a judicial officer in the county division would necessitate capital expenditures for the creation of a courtroom, and further expenditures for the addition of the staff, technological equipment and supplies and security necessary to run that courtroom. If there is a substantial increase in the filings of Class D felonies in the criminal division, not only would the county save staffing and capital expenditure just described, the county would also save a substantial sum on the reimbursement of public defender fees.

Attached as Exhibit 3 is a memo from Lilia Judson addressing the impact of the additional D felonies on the Lake County Public Defender's Office. Ms Judson notes that if the D felonies remain in the county division, the county bears the entire expense of public representation, whereas the county would be reimbursed for 40% of the public defender expenses if the D felonies are handled in the criminal division. Specifically, she states,

"Shifting even some of the D cases to the criminal divisions and the state plan could actually

be a net saving to the county property tax burden."

IV. Conclusion

The plan proposed herein (Exhibit 2), which was agreed to by the senior judges of

each division, is a much more reasonable and equitable plan to better equalize the utilization

numbers of each division. The judges of the criminal division strongly urge the court to

accept this plan calling for the reassignment of cases, and to reject any plan calling for the

movement of judicial personnel.

FOR THE CRIMINAL DIVISION OF THE SUPERIOR COURT:

SALVADOR VASQUEZ,

Senior Judge

DIANE ROSS BOSWELL, Judge - Room III

Dated this 29th day of May, 2008.

CLARENCE D. MURRAY,

Judge - Room II

THOMAS P. STEFANIAK, JR.,

Judge - Room IV

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APPOINTED JUDICIAL OFFICERS

Appointed judicial officers assist the elected judge with the court's caseload. Frequently courts share appointed officers based on case types, weight of cases, extended absences, et cetera. Magistrates, Commissioners, Referees and Hearing Officers are considered "regularly assigned" judicial officers and are thus considered when the Division of State Court Administration compiles the Weighted Caseload Report. Judges Pro Tempore, temporary judges, senior judges and transfer judges are considered provisional and are not considered when determining the weighted caseload report for each court.

Senior Judge:

<u>Appointment:</u> certain courts are permitted to apply for appointment of a senior judge. When approved, the Supreme Court appoints the senior judge to serve for the specified length of time requested. Only the Circuit, Superior, County, Probate, Court of Appeals and Tax Courts may request senior judges. City and Town courts and the Marion County Small Claims courts are exempted. 33-23-3-2

<u>Jurisdiction:</u> same jurisdiction as the presiding judge of the court but only during the days that the senior judge is serving.

Reporting on QCSR: Senior Judges are reported in Part VI on the back page of the QCSR and are not considered with respect to the Weighted Caseload Report. The Division of State Court Administration determines the number of Senior Judge days allotted to each court per year.

Magistrates:

<u>Appointment:</u> a magistrate must be an attorney and is appointed by the county judges. He or she is paid by the state.

<u>Jurisdiction:</u> has full judicial authority except he or she may not issue a judicial mandate or enter a final appealable order unless sitting as a judge *pro tempore* or special judge on the case. The presiding judge must countersign all final appealable orders. Examples of final orders where countersignature is required: default judgment, agreed judgment, judgment following bench/jury trial, garnishment, replevin, possession, ejectment, name change, dismissal, setting aside judgment, indirect contempt, final decree, wage withholding, modification of decree, suspending driving license, appointment of guardian ad litem, permanent protective order, approval of final accounts of probate, appointment or termination of guardianship, determination of attorney fees, approval of petition for adoption, final decree of adoption, disposition in CHINS matter, placement reimbursement in CHINS, modification of CHINS, protective orders in CHINS, wavier indeliquency matter, fact-finding/dispositional in delinquency matters, parental participation in delinquency matter, voluntary or involuntary termination of parental rights, order establishing paternity, support/custody/parenting tine/modification order in paternity case,

dismissal of criminal charges, acquittals, judgements of conviction, expungement of arrest records, and bail bond forfeitures.

Reporting on QCSR: Magistrates are normally full time or part time employees of the court. As such they are assigned to set courts during the week. When reporting time served on the front page of the QCSR, the magistrate is reported in days or fractions of days by each court to which he or she reports, regardless of whether the time spent per week is spent in court, ruling on motions out of court, handling court-related business, attending conferences or meetings or taking allotted vacation time. Collectively, if the magistrate is full time, the QCSRs from his or her courts would report 5 days of service per week. If the magistrate is part time, the collected QCSRs would report the appropriate number of days the magistrate is expected to work per week.

Commissioners/Master Commissioners:

<u>Appointment:</u> All counties over voting population of 7,000 may appoint a probate commissioner. The titles "Commissioner" and "master commissioner" appear to be interchangeable. Specific statutes permit commissioners or master commissioners to be appointed, such as 33-33-5-4-Blackford, 33-33-15-4--Dearborn, 33-33-49-16--Marion, 33-33-59-4--Orange, 33-33-84-9--Vigo, 33-33.89.3-6--Wayne)

<u>Jurisdiction</u>: Commissioners generally have the same jurisdiction as magistrates. The presiding judge must countersign all final appealable orders. See above for examples of orders requiring countersignature.

Reporting on QCSR: Commissioners are reported the same as Magistrates on the QCSR.

Referees:

<u>Appointment:</u> A referee is appointed by a circuit or superior court judge and serves at the pleasure of the judge and performs the duties assigned by the judge. Referees can be appointed to serve in various courts, including special courts such as environmental court (13-30-1-10), domestic relations courts (31-12-1-9), certain juvenile courts (31-31-3-6) and small claims divisions of superior and circuit courts. (33-29-3-3)

<u>Jurisdiction</u>: The referee performs the tasks assigned to him or her by the presiding judge. He or she would make recommendations to the presiding judge for ruling but does not enter rulings independently.

Reporting on the OCSR: Referees are reported the same as Magistrates on the QCSR.

Hearing Officers:

<u>Appointment</u>: Hearing officers are new judicial officers in Indiana. Only a few counties have hearing officers (see 33-33-2--Allen, Vanderburgh Local Rule -- Family Court)

<u>Jurisdiction</u>: The statutes permitting counties to hire and pay hearing officers have vested the officers with the authorities granted magistrates.

Reporting on the QCSR: Hearing officers are reported the same as magistrates on the QCSR. Frequently Hearing Officers are not full time employees and therefore the services reported is frequently less than 5 days per week.

Temporary Judges:

<u>Appointment:</u> Presiding Judges of circuit, superior or county courts may appoint temporary judges. Small claims, City and Town are exempted. The appointment must be in writing and made part of the record. The person appointed must be an attorney and a resident of the judicial district of the presiding judge. If appointed for juvenile law cases, two judges must agree to the appointment (33-38-11-1). Temporary judges may also be appointed to fulfill magistrate's duties as well.

<u>Jurisdiction</u>: A temporary judge has the same authorities as the presiding judge but may not exercise the power of judicial mandate. He or she may sit as a temporary judge even if the presiding judge is present and presiding in court as well. This is the distinction between judge *pro tempore* and temporary judge. The presiding judge may limit the powers of the temporary judge under 33-38-11-6. A temporary judge may serve as judge *pro tempore* or special judge but does not receive additional compensation. He or she may only serve as temporary judge for 60 days or less, with some exceptions 33-38-11-10.

Reporting on the OCSR: Temporary Judges are reported in Part VI on the back page of the QCSR and are not considered when the weighted caseload report is compiled.

Judges Pro Tempore:

Appointment: There are 4 ways Judges *pro tempore* (*pro tem*) are appointed. 1. A presiding judge may appoint a judge *pro tem* in writing when the judge knows he or she will be unable to attend and preside for any case for a day or period of days. (T.R. 63) 2. If a judge did not anticipate that he or she would be unable to attend and preside at court, the clerk of the court, deputy clerk of the court, or any available county official may appoint a judge *pro tem*. (T.R. 63) 3. If a judge dies, is sick or prevented to preside by other casualty, or does not appear for a period of 3 days, 34-35-1-5 provides the method by which a judge *pro tem* is appointed. The appointed person must be an attorney and serves until the judge returns or a permanent judge *pro tem* is appointed. 4. I.C. 5-9-4-8 provides for the appointment of a judge *pro tem* by the supreme court when a judge takes a leave of absence. The judge will serve until the end of the leave or when the office term expires, whichever is earlier.

<u>Jurisdiction</u>: during the period of appointment, the judge *pro tem* has the same authority as the judge replaced, including convening a grand jury. If the presiding judge was disqualified on a case or is otherwise without jurisdiction, the judge *pro tem* cannot serve on the case either. The judge *pro tem* has continuing jurisdiction to rule on any case taken under advisement during the appointment, conclude any trial or hearing, including sentencing, that carries over after the period of appointment.

Reporting on the OCSR: Judges Pro Tempore are reported in Part VI on the back page of the QCSR and are not considered when the weighted caseload report is compiled.

Transfer Judges:

<u>Appointment:</u> Transfer judges are judges who perform duties in other courts in accord with case allocation plans adopted based on Admin.R. 1(E).

<u>Jurisdiction:</u> Transfer judges have the same authority as the presiding judge of the court to which the case has been assigned.

Reporting on the QCSR: Transfer judges are judges who perform duties in courts other than their own based on a caseload allocation plan (CAP). Their service is reported in Part VI on the back of the QCSR. The Judge who *serves* as a transfer judge in another court reports the days of service per week in Part VI, Question 2. The court that receives assistance from a transfer judge during the quarter reports the total number of cases or fractions of days in Part VI, Question 1. Many CAPs are based on case-type filings and thus the days served fluctuate based on the number of cases filed in each quarter. Also, the transfer judge may not work in each court the same amount of time each quarter.

5/12/08

WEIGHTED CASELOAD PLAN SPECIFICS

REMOVES ALL PL FILING IN COUNTY

JUDICIAL ALLOCATION:

- 1. Continues judicial reallocation from Criminal Division to County 2 (.40)
- 2. Restores Civil 2 to 1.2 judicial officers (from .80)
- 3. Removes assistance from Civil 6 (.1) and Civil 7 (.1) to County 2

CASE FILING CHANGES:

- 1. Random file PL, MF, CT AND MI in Civil Division
- 2. Removes all PL case filing from the County Division.
- 3. Random files CC and PO by court location in the Civil Division
- 4. Files FD cases 50/50 between the Criminal and County Division
- 5. Adds 750 CM filings to County 1 while decreasing CM filings in County 2, 3 and 4 by 250 CM filings per court
- 6. Random files MC cases in the Criminal Division
- 7. Provides for the filing of 10 non-CHINS AD cases to be transferred into each Civil Division court

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COHEN AND THIROS PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

WESTON COURT

200 East 90th Drive

MERRILLVILLE, INDIANA 46410-8102

May 29, 2008

Telephone (219) 769-1600 Fax Number (219) 738-3769

> MAX COHEN RETIRED

*ALSO ADMITTED IN ILLINOIS

Indiana Supreme Court 20 West Washington Street Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

ATTENTION: Lilia Judson

Dear Ms. Judson:

NICK J. THIROS

MARK A. THIROS

JAMES N. THIROS

PAUL G. STRACCI

T. EDWARD PAGE

ALISON L. BENJAMIN SAMUEL G. VAZANELLIS*

STEPHEN C. BOWER

As Chairman of the Lake Superior Court Public Defender's Board I am writing this letter to express my opposition to the May 16, 2008 proposed weighted caseload plan that calls for the reassignment of a full time Magistrate from the Criminal Division to the County Division. The Criminal Division of the Superior Court is an extremely busy division and the loss of a full time judicial officer will have a serious detrimental impact on the ability of the court to resolve cases in a timely manner. Any delay in the administration of justice in criminal cases jeopardizes the constitutional rights of the defendants that we represent.

Having practiced in these courts for many years as a private practitioner I can personally vouch for the tremendous amount of work the Magistrates perform. Not only do they handle initial hearings, probation revocation matters, bond hearings in murder cases, which can go on for several days, but they are also asked to serve in a Judge's absence as well as to take over daily court calls when the court has extended and lengthy trials. This does not include the handling of PCR hearings which, as you are aware, are time consuming and at times take up more time than the actual trial.

I strongly urge you to reject any proposed plan that calls for the removal of a judicial officer from the criminal division.

Sincerely,

Jish 1, Amis

Nick J. Thiros, Chairman

Lake Superior Court Public Defender Board

NJT:eac

From: Ijudson@courts.state.in.us [mailto:ljudson@courts.state.in.us]

Sent: Thursday, May 01, 2008 2:19 PM

To: John R. Pera

Cc: dneal@,courts.state.in.us

Subject: Fw: Lake County Public Defender Program

Judge Pera,

Please see the attached message regarding the Lake County PD program. The link in that message will take you to the 25 -page document spelling out the Public Defender Commission standards. On P. 14 of the Standards is Table 1, which lists the maximum PD caseload for counsel that do not have sufficient support staff (as defined elsewhere.)

For counsel without adequate support:

Class D felonies 150 cases for a full time 75 cases for a part time PD.

For counsel with adequate support:

Class D felonies 200 for a full time 100 for a part time PD.

The 2007 reported Class D filings in the County Court divisions were as follows:

Division 1 478

Division 2 449

Division 3 460

Division 4 459

Total 1846 One half =- 923 x 90% (assuming 90% of all cases require appointment) = 830

Based on the 2007 figures, if 1/2 Class D felony's were transferred to the criminal courts, and if 90% of those cases need a public defender, then the need for additional full time PD's in the criminal division would be about 5.5 full time people (without adequate staff support). The part time number would be double, or 11 people.

By the same estimates, if 90% of the Class D felony cases now filed in the County Courts need PD's and the PD's are all part time, then those courts collectively would need about 22 PD's for the class D felonies.

It's important to keep in mind that the state would reimburses 40% of the PD expenses added to the criminal divisions, where if they stay with the county division, the county will continue to bear the entire expense. Shifting even some of the D cases to the criminal divisions and the state plan could actually be a net savings to the county property tax burden.

Feel free to call me or Debbie Neal if you'd like to discuss the PD program at greater length.

Lilia Judson Executive Director Indiana Supreme Court Division of State Court Administration 30 South Meridian Street Suite 500 Indianapolis, IN 46204-3568

317-232-2542

ljudson@courts.state.in.us

---Forwarded by Lilia Judson/incourts on 05/01/2008 02:51 PM----